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The Focus



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Chapter 1 by Grant Davidson

2077: Earth, our home for so many years began its death throws. Over-mined, over-taxed, over-populated. It had been teetering on the brink of disaster for decades, now it was at the breaking point. Humans had to find a way to survive. Extinction Loomed.

2101: The DSI or Deep Space Initiative announced a breakthrough of staggering immensity. ""The focus". A method of interplanetary transport capable of sending people, cargo, ships, even whole buildings to any spot in the universe through matter phasing and quantum entanglement. Instantly.

2105: The first humans were settled on a planet orbiting a star labeled XM-15456, roughly 271,000 light years from earth. The Colony went "no-contact" suddenly. A team of Search and rescue operatives from the DSI were sent to investigate. The team was never heard from again.

"Dyson, get your scrawny ass over here. We phase in less than an hour and I need that gear

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the slightest harm. "Aye top, on it" I replied in my best can-do attitude voice. He knew I would have it all done in the next 10 minutes. I always do.

Before we jump right in, I guess you should know who I am, and why you should bother playing this H-Vid any further. Well, here goes.

My name is Mark Wells, call sign "Dyson". I work for the DSI in the Search and Rescue division of Focal point 42. Or 42 ways to die, as we affectionately call it. Honestly we do very little search and rescue. It's just a name that the public finds more acceptable. The most likely wouldn't care for "alien murder squad". Just a guess.

I am the Technology and integration security specialist class 1A on the team. In layman's terms, the Hacker. If it's tech, and it presents a problem, it's my job to deal with it. I also keep our tech secure, sync'd up, and talking to home, as well as handling the Phasing back when we're on some godforsaken rock a billion light years from the nearest indoor plumbing. I was born right here, on good old Earth, and well.... do you really give a rat's ass about the rest? I'm gonna guess not.

We, that being my squad of First Sgt. Jim Boyle call sign "Mutant", PFC Nancy Norran call sign "Siren", PFC Arnold Wachowski call sign "Lingo" and Captain Alexander Breyton, call sign "Brando", the infamous "Fubar Five" were all gathered with what appeared to be hungover enthusiasm to hear our latest mission, get our gear 5x5, and figure out who fight or fucked their way home from the bars last night. In other words, a typical Tuesday. Word was a FSRO (Far Space Research Outpost) had gone no-con, and the higher ups were looking for answers. no surprise there, those places cost around a 100 billion credits, and another hefty chunk of change to phase in safely. Safe being the operative word in that statement. No-con could mean technical problems, aliens, or worse yet, Mentation. We just had to wait and see how the cosmos was going to screw us on this one. That was our job you see, getting screwed a zillion miles from home and figuring out how to un-fuck the situation, save some lives if possible, and get home without turning into space jello. Fun job right?

We all were most worried about a Mentation situation. The public doesn't discuss Mentation

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ours can get all jumbled up. Flipped and twisted around. Not always, or even often, but it does happen. The outcome of which is one of 3 states.

1: Synostesic confusion. You're generally confused and disoriented for a while until your brain sorts it out on its own. Kinda like being 12 shots into a bottle of Galactic Blue Label.

2: Mentated Aggravation. You're confused and pissed. Looking to bloody someone up a bit or scream at the wife...for a month. Add 4 shots of Tequila and a few lines of Io powder to previous description.

3. Complete Mentation. This is a old school, right out horror show. You go irreversibly bat-shit homicidal insane. I've seen these guys blow babies out of airlocks, rape men and women, and blow up entire star-ships, them included, but throwing people into fusion reactors.... among other things. The worst part? It unlocks part of the brain, making them smarter, faster, stronger, and tough as quadtanium.

We had one guy on Tauran Alpha 17 went MMA (massively mentated asshole) and tossed his wife and son into the re-processor of his Hab module waited 4 hours and ate the output. It took 44 plasma rounds from a Sterling AMA 200 Boltor Rifle to put that freak down, and he, well he was one of the easy ones. I mentiond this was a fun job right?

All done. Gear is functioning properly, comms are sync'd. My personal Hack/Tap is top of the line and in great condition (It should be, I spent 8 months pay on it myself. Government equipment is one step above shit. I couldn't hack a water fountain with the crap they issue us). "Five by Five here Top". I yelled over to Brando. "Copy that". he remarked offhandedly. Like he expected me to fuck up a gear check. Jesus. "Rally at the ops center. Briefing room 21. 23:00 hours. Move yer ass computer boy". Another of his loving connotations. I think deep down inside he really liked me. Kinda like you might like smallpox, or the clap. "Roger that Top, en route now" I replied as I headed for the grav-lift. 125 Floors above me was the briefing room, the mission, and though I didn't know it at the time, the turning point in my life. The day was about to go from routine to balls out weird at 1000 miles an hour.

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